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A
SERMON
Preach'd at the
CONSECRATION
OF A
CHURCH,
IN THE
PARISH of *Castle-Ton*,
NEAR
SHERBORNE, DORSET.
September 7. 1715.

By JAMES LACY, Vicar of
SHERBORNE.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *W. Taylor*, at the Ship in Pater-Noster-
Row ; and *J. Cooke*, Bookfeller in Sherborne. 1715.

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DEDICATION

it highly deserves a Publick Acknowledgment. And
if We should hold our Peace, the very Stones of
the Sanctuary would be silent.

RIGHT HONOURABLE
WILLIAM
LORD DIGBY,

BARON DIGBY of Geashill.

My LORD,

THE Command of the Right Reverend
Father in GOD the *Bishop* of Bristol,
as well as of the Reverend *Dean* of
Sarum, in Conjunction with the De-
sires of my Reverend Brethren the Clergy, ha-
ving encouraged the following *Sermon* to appear
in Publick, I presume to offer it to Your Lord-
ship's Acceptance and Patronage.

It was, My LORD, Your great Love to GOD
and Religion, which put You upon Building an
House for Divine Worship ; And I know 'tis
much in Your Lordship's Heart, to make it Useful
to the whole Neighbourhood : A Design, so
Pious and Charitable to the Souls of Men, that
it

DEDICATION.

It highly deserves a *Publick Acknowledgment*. And if *We* should hold our Peace, the very Stones of the Sanctuary would cry out.

But, *My LORD*, I have another *End* in this *Address*, and that is, to recommend the *Sermon* to the World, and so better serve those *Ends* of *Piety*, to which it is design'd, by setting before it so *Eminent* an Example, of *Delighting in the Dwellings of the Lord*, and the *Holy Services* performed in them.

'Tis easy to enlarge here, as well as in all other *Parts of True Religion and Vertue*, the best *Ornaments* of the *Great* and the *Noble*. But I am sensible that this will offend Your *Lordship*; and therefore shall only Pray, That *GOD* would prolong a Life so very *Valuable* in this degenerate Age, pour down all possible *Blessings* upon Your *Lordship* and Your *Family* here, and plentifully *Reward Your Works of Piety and Charity*, with greater *Degrees of Happiness* hereafter.

I am, *My LORD*,

Your *Lordship's* most humble
and most obliged *Servant*,

JAMES LACY.

SERMON, &c.

PSAL. LXXXIV. I.

*How Amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord
of Hosts!*

THOUGH we cannot learn from the Title of this Psalm, *who* the Author of it was, yet being certainly composed by one who was *hindred* from partaking of the *Publick Worship*, 'tis most likely to be holy *David's*, and penn'd upon the *same Occasion* with the 42d and 43d Psalms.

This *Man after God's own Heart*, bears all his other Afflictions with wonderful Patience and Resignation; the Revilings of his Enemies, the Revolts of his Friends, the Rebellion of his Beloved Son *Ab-salom*, the Disgrace of his Family, and the Eclipse of his Glory.

But to be *Banish'd from the Presence of the Lord*, from the Place of his peculiar *Abode*, to be deprived of the *Publick Worship of the Sanctuary*, this is a Cir-

B

cumstance

circumstance of Suffering which sits heaviest upon his Spirits, and causeth him to cry out for the disquietness of his Heart.

My Soul longeth (saith he, v. 2.) yea, even fainteth for the Courts of the Lord, my Heart and my Flesh cryeth out for the Living God: Yea, the Sparrow (as he goes on in his elegant Complaints) hath found an House, and the Swallow a Nest for her self, where she may lay her Young, even thine Altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God. While he himself is denied this Liberty, he seems to envy the very Birds, who have a free Access to, and an undisturb'd Abode in the House of God.

Then he proceeds to admire the *Felicity* of Those who have the Opportunity of paying their *Constant* Devotion in his House; and at all the *Solemn* Hours of Worship, can return to their Exercise of Praise and Thanksgiving: *Blessed are they that dwell in thy House, they will be still Praising thee.*

And no doubt but it was upon the calling to Remembrance the *Pleasant Service* he was engaged in, *when he went with the Multitude, and brought them forth into the House of God, in the Voice of Praise and Thanksgiving, among such as keep Holy-day*, that he breaks out into this *Passionate Ejaculation*, *How Amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! q. d. O God, the Lord and Creator of all the Angelick Natures, what can be so Lovely and Desirable, as to be admitted into thy Sanctuary, and enjoy the Benefits, the Comforts and Transports of it?*

These Words offer to our Consideration two Things;

1. The one Supposed; *That there have been always Places built, and set apart for the Publick Service of God; called his Houses or Dwellings.*

2. The

2. The other Express'd; *That these Places are Amiable and Desirable.*

When I have spoken to both these, I will in the Third and Last Place

3. *Make some Application of them with a special Regard to the Occasion of this Assembly.*

1st. I am to speak of the thing Supposed; viz. *That there have been always Places Built and set apart for the Service of God, call'd his Houses or Dwellings; briefly observing the Reasons why they are so called.* The meer Light of Nature hath put all Nations upon erecting Places for the Honour of their Gods, and for their own Conveniency in meeting together to pay their Religious Services and Devotions; which, being to be perform'd by the joint Concurrence of several People, do not only require that a Time be fix'd when; but also a determinate Place be appointed whither they may repair and meet each other.

And from this Natural Principle, and the Guidance of God's holy Spirit, the antient Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, no sooner came to any new Place of abode, and pitched their Tents, but they had their Altars for Divine Worship, where they call'd on the Name of the Lord.

In the Wilderness, the Israelites themselves having no settled Habitation, a moveable Tabernacle was made by God's special Command and Direction, call'd the Tabernacle of the Congregation, to which every one Resorted that sought the Lord.

But when the Church began to be Happy in a settled State; David the King, from his pious Zeal for God's House, design'd, but Solomon built him an House; which, as it was by the Appointment of Heaven, so was it in it self Sumptuous and Magnificent,

cent, the very *Beauty of Holiness*, the *Glory of the Nation*, and the *Wonder of the World*.

In this Place *Sacrifices* were offered ; The Law was *openly* read ; hither the whole Nation resorted at *Solemn Festivals* ; and here too were *daily Prayers* at *stated Hours*, on which Devout People gave their Attendance.

And after, when for the Sins of the People, *that Temple* was destroyed, *another* was erected in the room of it ; which, how short soever it fell of the former in *outward Splendor* and *Appearance*, was yet truly more *Glorious*, in that it entertain'd the *King of Glory*, the *Desire of all Nations*, the *Ever-blessed Son of God*.

Besides this, there were *other Structures* set apart for *Prayer* and *Preaching* in every Town, call'd *Synagogues* ; Places honour'd with the Presence of *Christ* and his *Apostles* ; and for the erecting one of which the *Centurion's Praise* is to this Day recorded in the Gospel, as a *Publick Benefactor* to a whole Nation.

And though *Infant Christianity* was so *Afflicted*, *Persecuted* and *Tormented*, that the Disciples of our Lord were fain sometimes to worship God in *Deserts* and *Mountains*, and in *Dens* and *Caves* of the Earth ; yet certain it is, that they had their *Oratories* and Places *Appropriate* for their Exercises of *Religious Worship*.

Such was that *Upper Room* mention'd in the *Acts of the Apostles*, into which the *Apostles* and *Disciples* (after their Return from our Saviour's *Ascension*) went up, as into a Place commonly known, and separate to *Divine Use*, *Acts* 1. 13. Such a one, if not the same, was that *one Place*, wherein they were all *assembled* with *one Accord*, upon the Day of *Pentecost*, when the *Holy Ghost* visibly came down upon them.

them. And we know that the *Apostle St. Paul* opposes the *Church of God* to *Common* and *Ordinary Houses*, and blames the *Corinthians* for using *common Feasting* in it. *What* (saith he) *have ye not Houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the Church of God?* 1 Cor.

II. 12.

And if there had not been such *Places*, the *Persecuting Emperors* needed not have made *Edicts*, sometimes for taking them away from *Christians*, and sometimes for utterly demolishing them, as we find they did.

As for the *Ages after the Apostles*, and when it pleased God to raise up *Kings* and *Emperors* to favour his *Holy Religion*, and to countenance it with their *Civil Authority*, then the Number of *Churches* was multiplied. And that *forward Devotion*, those *free-will Offerings* which once so much rejoiced the Heart of *David* to behold in the *Jews* on such an Account, were then every where visible among *Christians*. Persons of all *Ranks* and *Orders* endeavour'd to out-vie one another in their Contributions: They spared no Cost, and thought nothing too dear, not only to *Build*, but to *Beautify* and *Adorn* those *Sacred Edifices*. Expences of that Nature went under the Name of *Piety* and *Devotion*, and none counted *That Waste*, which was expended about so *Religious* a Work.

'Twould take up more Time than I have at present, to enquire into the many *stately Churches* that were founded by the *first Christian Emperor* *Constantine*, and *other Converts* about his Time; what *noble Gifts* were bestowed on those *Places*, and the *Persons* ministering in them; and how *liberal* this *Land* of ours was upon such Occasions: A *Liberality*, *blessed be God*, *now reviving*, and every Day increasing among us.

This little, I hope, may suffice to shew, that there have been always *Places Buil*t, and set apart for

for the *Service* of God. Why *these* are called *His Houses*, or *Dwellings*, will soon appear, if we consider them as *dedicated* to *Him*, and as *He* is more immediately there *present*.

That the two *Temples* of the *Jews* were thus *dedicated* to God by *Divine Appointment*, is abundantly evident from their *own History* in the *Old Testament*. The *first* was, with the *greatest Solemnity*, *dedicated* by *Salomon*, as you heard but now at large in the *First Lesson*. After the *Demolition* of *that*, and the *End* of their *Captivity*, by the *Encouragement* of two *Persian Princes*, the *People*, the *Elders*, the *Priests*, and the *Prophets*, all joyn'd in *Re-building* it, and, as *Ezra* tells us, kept the *Dedication* with great *Joy*, Chap. 6.

So also 'twas with the *Primitive Christians*; *Houses* were no sooner built for their *Assembling* together to *worship* God, but, after the *Custom* of the *Jews*, they were set apart with the *solemn Rites* of a *formal Dedication*: By which *Solemnities*, as the *Founders* surrender'd all the *Right* they had in them to God; so they were separated from all *Common* and *Profane Uses*, and *Consecrated* to the *Sacred Offices* of *Religion* only.

To this *Purpose*, there usually assembled a *vast Concourse* of *Bishops*, and *Confessors*, and other *Holy Men*, from all *Parts*: They sang *Psalms* and *Hymns*, had the *Holy Scripture* *Read*, and *Preached* upon it; offered up *Prayers* and *Thanksgivings*, and received the *Holy Eucharist*. Then also they gave *liberally* to the *Poor*, bestowed *great Gifts* on the *Church*, and shewed the *highest Expressions* of *mutual Love* and *Kindness*, and rejoicing with one another.

And the *Commemoration* of these *Dedications* was constantly observed once a *Year* with *great Joy* and *Festivity*; some *Shadow* whereof still remains to
this

this Day, in the *Wakes* and *Festivals* observ'd in several Places in Memory of the Dedication of their particular Churches.

Indeed, we are not now (under the State of the Gospel) to expect that God should so signally declare his Approbation and Acceptance of our present Consecrations, as he did heretofore : But we need not doubt, but whatsoever is *Given to God*, and *Accepted* by his *Minister*, is well-pleasing to him, and becomes as entirely *His*, as ever the *Tabernacle* or *Temple* was, which he took Possession of in a more visible manner, and filled with a *Cloud* and with *Glory*.

It may henceforth be looked upon to be his *Sanctuary*, and his *Holy Dwelling* : *Holy*, not *Essentially*, so only God himself is ; not by *Participation*, so only are *Angels*, *Saints*, and *Good Men* ; but *Relatively*, as being separated from common Uses, and devoted to God's especial Honour and Service.

And his *Dwelling* also, because the *Divine Presence* here more particularly shews it self : For though *Heaven* is God's *Throne*, and the *Earth* is his *Footstool*, and he dwelleth not in *Temples made with Hands*, so as to be confined within their Walls, like the *Heathen Idols* ; yea, tho' he is so *Immense a Being*, that he fills all Places, and is every where present ; yet he manifests himself in some Places after a more especial manner than in others, and is more eminently present in the *Congregation of the Saints*, by his answering the devout Prayers there made unto him.

So he himself has promised, *Exodus 20, 4th Verse* ; *In all Places where I record my Name, will I come unto thee, and bless thee. Where I record my Name, i. e. which are devoted to my Worship and Service : In these Places I will be more signally gracious, by my imparting the special Favours and Blessings you stand most in need of.*

The

The same also we learn from that most pious Prayer of King Solomon at the Dedication of the Temple, 1 Kings 8, 30, &c. *Hearken thou to the Supplications of thy People Israel, when they shall pray towards this Place: And hear thou in Heaven thy Dwelling-Place, and when thou bearest, forgive, &c.* His more peculiar Dwelling-Place was then, and always, in Heaven, as it is now; but his Ears were open to the Prayers of his Servants in that Place.

And why should we not think, that He is in this Manner present in all our Places of Publick Devotion, when the Blessed Jesus assures us, *Matth. 18, 20, that where two or three are gathered together in his Name, he is there in the midst of them?* There ready to receive their Supplications, and to grant the Desires of their Souls. For the Granting our Requests, as you may find by the preceding Verse, is the Meaning of our Lord's being with us: And if he will be thus gracious to a few, who assemble in Christian Love and Charity, and agree to put up the same Petitions to God, much more when greater Numbers unanimously joyn in the same Worship, and offer up the same Prayers and Thanksgivings to God in the same Words.

Since therefore, what the Tabernacle and Temple were to the Jews, the same is every Church and Chappel to us Christians, Places set apart, and consecrated to the Service of God, and which may be as truly call'd His Houses and Dwellings as they were; nothing should be so amiable in our Eyes, nothing so desirable, nor should we long for any thing more than to enter into the Courts of the Lord, to see his Glory and Power, so as we have seen it in the Sanctuary: Which brings me to the

II^d Thing

II^d Thing considerable in my Text, *That the Houses or Dwellings of God are Amiable and Desireable. How Amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! For*

First, *Are not such Places more apt to excite Devotion, than Places of common Use?* And is there any one, whose Heart has not shook off all Sense of what is Sacred, that does not find himself otherwise affected, than when he enters into a private House.

The Consideration of *whose House* we are in, minds us of the Business of the Place, and strikes a kind of Awe into our Thoughts, when we reflect upon that *Sacred Majesty* we usually converse with there. And the *Beauty and Comeliness* of it, not only takes our Eye, and pleases it, but carrieth also its Profit along with it, enlivens our Devotion, rouses it when it slumbers, and recalls it when it wanders.

For so the Grace of God is pleased to move us by Ways suitable to our Nature, and to sanctify these sensible and Inferior Helps to greater and higher Purposes; that as the Soul receives Impressions through the Senses, so the Devotion of it may be heighten'd by the Loftiness, the Beauty and Ornaments of the Temple.

Secondly, *Does not the Company we join with in these Places, render them also Lovely and Desireable to us?* Here are the Tribes gathered together, even the Tribes of the Lord. And can any thing so rejoyce a Good Man's Heart, as to hear the Voice of a Multitude; to be among much People, Worshipping and Praising

sing God for his Goodness in the Congregation of his Saints?

GOD, to be sure, was a little Sanctuary to David when he was driven from the Publick Worship, and he had a private Oratory in his own Breast, where he could mentally retire, and shut up his Thoughts and Affections; and yet as the Hart pants after the Water brooks; So pants his Soul after the Enjoyment of God in the Publick Solemnities.

When he was bless'd with a free Opportunity of Access to the Tabernacle, how is he carried, as it were, beyond himself, in holy Raptures of Joy? And how glad was he, how much did it rejoice his Spirit, when he heard the good People say one to another, We will go into the House of the Lord! The sight of a Company there, their Number, their Unanimity, their Devotion, these all dilate his Heart, awake his Viol and Harp, and are more refreshing to him than any thing on this side Heaven.

And indeed, as God is more honoured by such Publick Assemblies; so 'tis to be presumed, that greater Blessings attend their Services, than the Devotions of private Houses. United Force is very powerful. They were the Prayers of the Church that delivered Peter out of Prison: And whenever the People of God have been plunged into more than ordinary Difficulties, and therefore more earnestly desired the Assistance of the Almighty, they have in greater Numbers resorted to his House, and with an Unanimous Consent, and a hearty Devotion invaded Heaven, and (as I may so say) forced down a Blessing from thence.

Besides, That Devotion, which when performed by single Votaries, or by few, is apt to languish and flag, is by the Company of others increas'd and improv'd, whilst that Holy Flame which shines forth
in.

in some, kindles the like *Andurr* in the *Beasts* of
all.

To all Holy and Devout Souls, I dare appeal for the Truth of this; and I doubt not but there are many (not very good Men) who have found by their own Experience, that, as *Saul* among the *Prophets*, had another Heart given him, and the Spirit of God came upon him also, till he became like one of them; so these, in the Assembly of God's People, from the ardent Zeal and strong Affections of others, have found many good Motions wrought in themselves, their Hearts more enlarged and cheerful, their Affections more raised, and their Souls fill'd as with Marrow and Fatness, when their Mouth praiseth God with joyful Lips. But

Thirdly, As the Company, so the Ordinances perform'd in such Places of publick Worship, are every delightful to those that seriously and devoutly attend upon them; I say seriously and devoutly attend upon them: For it must be confess'd that these are not so pleasing to all Persons. Some there are whose Minds are so earthly and sensual, that they favour nothing that is Spiritual: To such, the Service of God must be an *irksome* Drudgery; But to others, whose Souls are purified from the Defilements of the World, and by the Practice of Religion wrought into a Heavenly and Devout Temper, it must be exceeding pleasant, and they can truly say with the Psalmist, *One Day in thy Courts is better than a thousand*, far more delightful than a thousand in any other Place.

The Prayers that are here made, wherein we breathe out our Souls, and send up our holy Desires to Heaven; what are these, but as so many Angels of Commerce between God and Us? Do we not hereby express our Wants, and receive a Supply

proportionable ; Support and Counsel, Health and Safety, Deliverance and Salvation ? All which must needs afford a Man more Joy and Comfort than any one is able to conceive, but he that has it.

And if the Pleasures of *Prayer* be so great, those of *Thanks-giving* and *Praise* must be much greater. For what indeed can be more *Delightful* than the Contemplation of *Infinite Love, Bounty, and Goodness* on God's Part ; and the Remembrance of *past*, the Sense of *present*, and the comfortable Prospect and Expectation of *future Blessings* on ours ? This cannot but excite in us *Acts of Love, Joy, and Admiration*, the most *Delightful Passions* of the Soul ; especially if we consider, that this is the Work of *Saints and Angels above*, and in the Performance of which *here below*, we more *eminently* make good our *Communion* with them.

So also, Is not the *Word of God* here read and expounded, very *desireable* to any *well-disposed Persons* ? Is it not a *Lanthorn* to our *Feet*, and a *Light* to our *Paths*, to guide us into the Ways of Peace, that we may know what to *believe* and *do* in order to our *Salvation* ? Are we not hereby warn'd against our *Spiritual Enemies*, and furnished with the most proper Weapons to repel their *fiercest Assaults* ? Does it not put us in mind of what we are too apt to forget, teach us to draw *good Consequences* from what we know, and *Inflame* our Affections when they are ready to grow *cool* in the Things of God and *Heaven* ? These, and many the like Advantages of *God's Word*, made *holy David* to *Rejoice* in it more than in great Riches : It was to him as his appointed Food, sweeter than the Honey and the Honey-Comb. Hence, as he describes a good Man by his *Delighting in the Law of God* ; so he tells us, That all the Day long was his study in it. The Affairs of State, the

the Government of his Kingdom, might indeed employ, but it was *This* that refresh'd his Mind.

And then for the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* frequently Celebrated in our Assemblies: Is not *This* that Feast where we may Eat that which is Good, delight our selves in Fatness, and with Joy drink everlasting Health out of the Wells of Salvation? Are not our Corruptions subdu'd, and our Sins pardon'd by thus applying the Merits of Christ's Blood: our Weakness strengthened by communicating the Influences of his Grace which he purchased for us by his Death; and we supported under all Temptations by a lively Representation of those great Things he hath suffered for us? Here, if ever, the Soul is comforted with Flägons, and our Devotions are animated with that Warmth and Vigour which nothing can resist. So that we cannot but account *this* the best Banquet we were ever invited to: And our Hearts being often strengthen'd with this Bread of Life, often refresh'd with this Wine of Gladness, we may run our Christian Race, not only with Patience, but with Ease and Cheerfulness too.

These are the Offices and Employments of God's House; And it must needs delight any Man that has the least Sense of Goodness, thus to wait on the great Lord and Governour of the World, to be employ'd in the Service of his Creator, which is the very End of his Being, and the Chief Business of his Life.

Yea, and what is more, the diligent Performance of these Duties, leaves so sensible a Satisfaction behind it, gives such a different Turn to the Soul, and inspires such heavenly Dispositions, that the Devotion of the Temple never goes off without a grateful Relish and powerful Effect, except either too seldom, or negligently repeated.

For,

For, Fourthly, *As by the Ordinances of the Sanctuary our Graces are improved; so we are hereby fitted, and our Souls dress'd for the Enjoyment of an happy Eternity; A sufficient Reason for its being so Amiable and Delightful to us. 'Tis by our frequent Addresses to God, that we learn to live with entire Submission to him, and Dependence upon him in all the Changes of this mortal Life. We cannot consider, and entertain our selves with him, (as is done in Divine Worship) but we must live always with a quick Sense of him upon our Minds, and under the Influences of the Holy Spirit to direct and assist us in all our Ways. Neither can we consider the Spiritual Nature of God, His Justice, Goodness, Faithfulness, Mercy, Love, and the like moral and spiritual Excellencies, wherein we are capable of Resembling and Conforming to him, and Admire, Praise, and Honour him for these, but this must conduce to the Forming and Increasing the same in us, and so advance our Resemblance and Conformity to God, the greatest Perfection and Accomplishment of human Nature.*

And whatsoever disposes us to live Holily here, Qualifies us also for the Happiness of Heaven. Our Future Portions will not be assign'd us according to our Hopes, but our Habits; and Happiness is nothing else but the Perfection of Holiness.

Those therefore who have spent their Days in the Tents of Wickedness, whose Hands have been seldom lift up but to Violence and Vanity, as they are utterly incapable to be happy in that Society, and in those Employments to which they are so great Strangers, so neither have they any Reason to expect it. But how easy, how pleasant will the Passage of a good Man be from the Courts of God's House to the Holy of Holies? Surely the glorifying God here in his
Earthly

Earthly Members, is a Prologue to that which he shall Be and Act hereafter; and he'll most readily bear a Part with the Celestial Quire in their most exalted Hallelujahs.

I have now done with the two Things my Text offers to our Consideration, and have shewn,

First, That there have been always Places built, and set apart for the Service of God, call'd his Houses or Dwellings, and observ'd the Reasons why they are so call'd. And then, Secondly, Have endeavour'd briefly to represent their Amiability, or what it is that makes them so. All that remains is in the

Third Place to make some Application of what hath been said, and especially with regard to the Occasion of this Assembly. And here,

First, Have we Places set apart for the Service of God? Let us bless him for Those who Erected them, and bless him also for those who Beautify and Adorn them; gratefully Honouring the Memory of such of them as are departed this Life, and Praying for a Blessing upon the Heads of those who survive; that God would remember them concerning this, and wipe not out their good Deeds that they have done for the Houses of our God.

Let us bless God's holy Name for those happy Opportunities of serving him in his Sanctuaries we now enjoy; that we are not forc'd from our Dwellings, and banish'd from our publick Assemblies, as our Forefathers sometimes were; but can with Ease and Safety step out of our own Houses into the House of God, and there be refresh'd with the Solaces of his Love.

Let

Let us joyfully Commemorate his abundant Goodness in placing us *where we are*; that he hath made us Members of a Church so wisely Constituted betwixt the Extremes that have divided Christendom; so fit to be the Center of Union among Christians, and so near to the Perfection of Beauty, that we are the chief Objects of the Roman Fury, as well as the Just Glory of the Reformation.

That the pure Word of God is Preach'd among us, and the Sacraments duly Administer'd by proper Persons, Authoriz'd for that purpose: That we have a Liturgy very agreeable to the Holy Scriptures and the most primitive Patterns; in all its Offices admirably well fitted to enkindle Zeal where it is not, and to encrease it where it is; which hath Advantages so many and so considerable, as not only to raise it self above the Devotion of other Churches, but to endear the Affections of good People to be in Love with Liturgy in general.

That we have Comeliness without affected Gaudiness; Gravity without Morosity; no Ornaments, no Usages administering to Superstition or Idolatry; but only such as tend to preserve the due Reverence to God and his Worship: A Religion, which being most fitted to the Nature of Man, cannot but be most acceptable to God, as well as Amiable to us.

And can there be a Juster Cause of Thanksgiving and Joy *this Day* before God, than to see another Church added not only for the Use of *this*, but of the Neighbour-Parish, whose Church being not sufficient for the Number of their Inhabitants, some have thence taken Occasion wholly to Neglect the Publick Worship of God, others to perform it in separate Assemblies with less Regularity, and less Advantage: With what Thanksgiving may you come now to

one

one or the other of these Houses of God, with what Praise into his Courts, be thankful unto him, and speak good of his Name?

Secondly, Hath God his Houses, and are they so Lovely and Desireable? Let us not, out of Profaneness, and for want of a due Sense of Religion, forsake the Assembling our selves together, as do some; nor out of Dislike to the Worship and Communion of our Church, as do others. To the former I may truly say, That as they hate Knowledge, and live as without God in the World, as if they had no Dependance upon Him; so the Time will come, when they shall call upon GOD, but he will not answer, and cry unto him for Mercy, but he will not bear them: And the Objections of the latter are so weak, and have been so often refuted, that I shall not now argue with them, but rather pity their Prejudices that hinder them from discerning the Beauty of Holiness, and pray God to open their Eyes, that seeing the many Mischiefs of Separation, they may be of one Heart and one Mind with us, and we may walk together unto the House of God as Friends. How Amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord! And how much more would they be so, if a whole Parish would flock to them, as the Doves to their Windows?

But till God shall be graciously pleas'd to afford us so great a Blessing: Let us who are in the Communion of our Church, not only come hither, but after the Example of the Psalmist, come with great Desire and Love for God's Worship: Serve the Lord with Gladness, and come before his Presence with Rejoycing; Come hither, as to meet him in a Place where he loves to meet us, and where he gives us the Blessings of his Love.

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The *Heathen* themselves thought their Gods should not be put off with a *Sacrifice* dragg'd to the *Altar* : If we go to Church but for *Fashion-sake*, for *Company*, or out of *Formality* ; if *Love* carries us not thither, 'tis plain that as we delight not in *God*, so will not he delight in us, nor can we see the *Loveliness* and *Beauty* of his *House*.

When the Church had Peace, the *Primitive Christians* forsook their *Sports* and *Pastimes*, left their *Secular Business*, and failed not of their constant Attendance on the publick *Worship* Morning and Evening : Yea, their *Zeal* and *Fervour* was so great, that, even in *Times of Persecution*, they would (if possible) meet together, either by *Day* or by *Night*, for that Purpose, though they hazarded their *Lives* for it. An *Eternal Shame* to some amongst us, who calling themselves of the *same Religion*, are yet so far from venturing their *Lives* and *Estates* to enjoy *Opportunities of Devotion*, that they will not leave their *Shops*, their *Recreations*, nay, their very *Idleness*, half an *Hour* and a little more, for a *freer* and more *easy* *Worship* than they could enjoy.

Thirdly, Are our Churches dedicated to the Service of *God* and *Religion* ? Let us take care that they be kept from all profane and common Use, and applied wholly to his *Worship* and *Service*. The *Dishonour* that is done to *GOD's House*, reflects upon *GOD* himself, and he resents it accordingly.

So when the first Court of the Temple at *Jerusalem* (the Court where the *Gentiles* worshipped, and which the *Jews* counted less Holy than the rest of the Temple) was made an *House of Merchandise*, the blessed *Jesus* look'd on this Abuse of it as such a

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Displeasure to GOD, that with *just* Indignation, and an *overpowering* Zeal he drove out them that bought and sold in it; *overthrew* the Tables of the Money-Changers, and the Seats of them that sold Doves. A very *besetting* and *strong* Expression of his just Displeasure against those *schismatical* People; how different soever it was to his *mild* and *gentle* Conduct on other Occasions.

And as usually good Laws spring from ill Manners; so also our great Master upon this Accident, affects the Sacredness of such Places, in the Words of the Prophet Isaiah, which now he made a Lesson Evangelical, My House shall be called an House of Prayer to all Nations; teaching us hereby, that every Place Dedicated to the Worship of God being Holy, should not be profaned or made use of to the transacting any *Worldly* Affairs; and that there is a Reverence due to God's House for the Owner's sake; and the sacred Offices there performed.

Fourthly, in God in a more especial manner present in our Churches. Let our Approaches be full of Reverence and Devotion: Reverence of the Body, Devotion of the Soul. The Patriarch Jacob no sooner perceived, that the Place where he lay at Bethel was Holy Ground, but he breaks out into this pious Ejaculation, How dreadful is this Place! This is none other but the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven, Gen. xxviii. 17. And were we but alike affected as this good Man was, we should at our coming in to the Congregation, and during the whole time of our being there, demean our selves with an *useful* Reverence suitable to the great Majesty we are before, and the Work we are about; standing while we praise GOD for his

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Goodness, and kneeling when we Implore his Mercy, as our Church hath directed us.

We should carefully abstain from all Irreverent Behaviour, Laughing, Whispering, Talking, or any such Indecencies, as unbecoming the Presence of any Superiour, but a Mortal Man, or a little above our selves, much more the Presence of the great and ever-living God.

And we should likewise take special Care to keep our Minds intent upon the Matter in hand; let our Hearts go along with our Words, and have our Souls elevated unto, and fixed upon that God, whose Majesty we acknowledge Present; ever remembering that as the inward Worship, without the outward, is rude and unmannerly; so the outward without the inward, is meer Pageantry and Hypocrisy; such as will by no means be acceptable to him who trieth the Heart, and searcheth the very Reins.

Fifthly and Lastly, Are our Churches God's Houses? Then we may make the Psalmist's Inference, Holiness becometh thine House for ever; and so live, that as they had their first Relation of Sanctity by the Consecration of a holy President of Religion, it may be perpetuated in Holy Offices, and receive a daily Consecration, by the assistance of sanctified and religious Persons, a holy Priest, and a holy People.

The Jews had written over the Gates of their Synagogues, that of the 118th Psalm and the 20th ver. This is the Gate of the Lord, the Righteous shall enter into it: And from the many Typical Precepts given to them, of washing and cleansing themselves by divers Ceremonies before they enter'd into the Sanctuary: We Christians should learn to bring along with us to this Place, Undeiled Bodies and sanctified

clified Minds, free from all filthy Lusts and unruly Passions.

All *Impenitent* Persons are *unfit* for Churches, and God rejects such *Sacrificers* as have no *Contrition*, no *Purpose* to forsake Sin, and keep his *Commandments* which are ever *Parts* of true *Repentance*. If we come hither, before hand resolved, that *hearing* we *will not hear*, nor *consider*; if we cry to God for *Mercy*, and yet will have none upon our selves; if we *ask* for *Grace*, and yet will *not take* it when 'tis offered to us, or turn it into *Wantonness*, we cannot expect that God should regard what we do; or that the *Holiness* of the *Place* should *Hallow* such *impure*, such *careless* *Worshippers*.

Hence it was, that in the *Primitive* Times, the *Deacon* stood up before the receiving the blessed *Eucharist*, and cried with a loud Voice, *Holy Things be to them that are holy*: And our Church in imitation of the *antient* Forms, hath put the *Confession* of *Sins* in the *first* Place, because God himself hath assured us, that he will not hear the *Prayers* of *wilful impenitent* Sinners.

Let us therefore in imitation of our Royal *Psalmist*, *wash our hands in Innocency*; repent of all our *Sins*, and lead holy and upright Lives, becoming Members of so *Holy*, so *Apostolical* a Church. Then we may enter God's Court with joy, and His House with *rejoycing*: We may go boldly to his *Altar*, as to the *Throne of Grace*: Our *Prayers* will be set forth in his sight as the *Incense*; and our *Praises* and *Thanks-givings* be an acceptable *Sacrifice*; GOD will give such a *Blessing* to his *Word*, that it will bring forth *Fruit* abundantly, and be a *savour of Life* unto Life, unto all them that bear it. And, as sure as we partake of the *Communion of Christ's Body*
and

and Blood, we shall be fulfilled with his Grace and
Heavenly Benediction.

In short : Let our Obedience keep time with our
Devotion : And then, as we need not doubt of God's
gracious Acceptance of our present hearty, though
imperfect Service ; so we shall in his due time,
be translated from these Amiable Tabernacles here be-
low, to that everlasting Tabernacle, that Building of
God, not made with Hands, Eternal in the Heavens :
Where we shall see God as He is, and shall praise him,
and magnify him for ever. Which G O D of his
Infinite Mercy grant unto Us, through the alone
Merits of JESUS CHRIST, our only L O R D and
SAVIOUR : To whom with the Father, and the
Holy Spirit, be given, all Honour, Worship and
Obedience, now, and for evermore.

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